

REMARKS

Claims 55, 57-59, 61, 62, 64, 65, and 67-79 are pending in the application. By amendment above, applicants amend Claims 55, 57, and 78. By amendment, applicants have canceled Claims 59, 61, 62, and 64.

Claims 55, 57-59, 61, 62, 64, 65 and 67-79 are rejected under 35 USC § 103(a) as being unpatentable over U.S. Patent No. 5,360,419, to Chen et al. For the following reasons, applicants respectfully traverse this rejection.

As amended, Claim 55 recites nonpolymeric diol binders; and Claim 78 recites nonpolymeric hydroxy acid binders. For the reasons given below, the subject matter of Claim 55 and Claim 78, as amended above, is nonobvious in view of Chen et al.

Claim 55, as amended, recites that the binder is a nonpolymeric diol. Chen et al. does not disclose or suggest a binder that is a nonpolymeric diol as recited in Claim 55. Col 4, lines 50-60, of Chen et al. disclose polymeric polyvinyl alcohol, and the polymeric glycols, polyethylene glycol and polypropylene glycol; however Chen et al. does not disclose or suggest nonpolymeric diols.

It follows that Chen et al. does not teach or suggest the specific nonpolymeric diols recited in dependent Claims 65 and 71-75.

As noted above, Claim 78 has been rewritten in independent form to incorporate the subject matter of Claim 55 and recites that the binder is a nonpolymeric hydroxy acid. As noted in the present specification at page 49, hydroxy acid binders are compounds that include both hydroxyl functionalities and carboxyl functionalities. Chen et al. does not disclose or suggest a method that uses a binder in the form of a nonpolymeric hydroxy acid to bind particles to fibers.

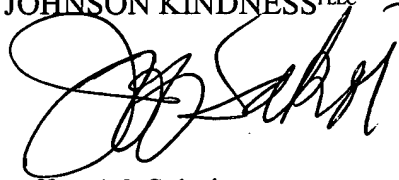
Claim 79 recites a specific nonpolymeric hydroxy acid, i.e., lactic acid. Chen et al. does not disclose or suggest a method that uses lactic acid as a binder for binding particles to fibers.

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For the foregoing reasons, independent Claim 55 and independent Claim 78 are novel and nonobvious over Chen et al. It follows that the claims dependent from these independent claims also define novel and nonobvious subject matter. Accordingly, applicants respectfully request withdrawal of the outstanding rejections and allowance of the application. If the reviewing party has any questions regarding the above, he is invited to call applicants' attorney at the number listed below.

Respectfully submitted,

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